

Ban sends Ohio smokers across Mich. border

■ Bars, restaurants along the Buckeye State's borders see drop in patrons who leave to light up.

By JOHN SEEWER
Associated Press

TOLEDO, Ohio — Bartender Tracy Smith quit her job in Ohio after voters banned smoking inside most public places so she could find work in Michigan.

It was a smart move.

Her tips are up, and the bar where she now works is looking for more help now that smokers are crossing the state line to light up.

"We are getting new faces every day," she said.

Bar owners across Ohio say the smoking ban is costing them customers, and along the edges of the state some are laying off employees and cutting hours because business is dwindling.

"When you're on the border like we are, it's going to take place," said Rick Van Winkle, whose Red Front Tavern in New Paris is just two minutes from Indiana.

"Some of my regular customers haven't been in for a month," he said. "I'm sure that's where they're at."

Patrick Carroll, president of the Cincinnati-based Buckeye Liquor Permit Holders Association, said it's not just bar own-

ers and employees who are hurting.

Beer and cigarette vendors are losing money, too, he said.

The smoking ban took effect in December, although many bar owners didn't pick up their ashtrays until May when the state began enforcing the new smoking rules.

Since then, business has been down by about 65 percent at State Line Bar & Grill in Masury, just outside Youngstown, straddling Pennsylvania.

"It hurts tremendously," said bartender Debbie Longley. "I don't know what we're going to do. It's just a small family bar."

Her hours have been cut from 50 a week to 20.

"Eighty percent of my tips are gone," she said.

Lawmakers in Michigan now are debating whether to ban smoking in all bars and restaurants. Similar legislation is being considered in Pennsylvania.

Not all Ohio bars on the state line are hurting.

That's because several counties along the Ohio River in West Virginia and Kentucky also have smoking bans, giving smokers no other options.

